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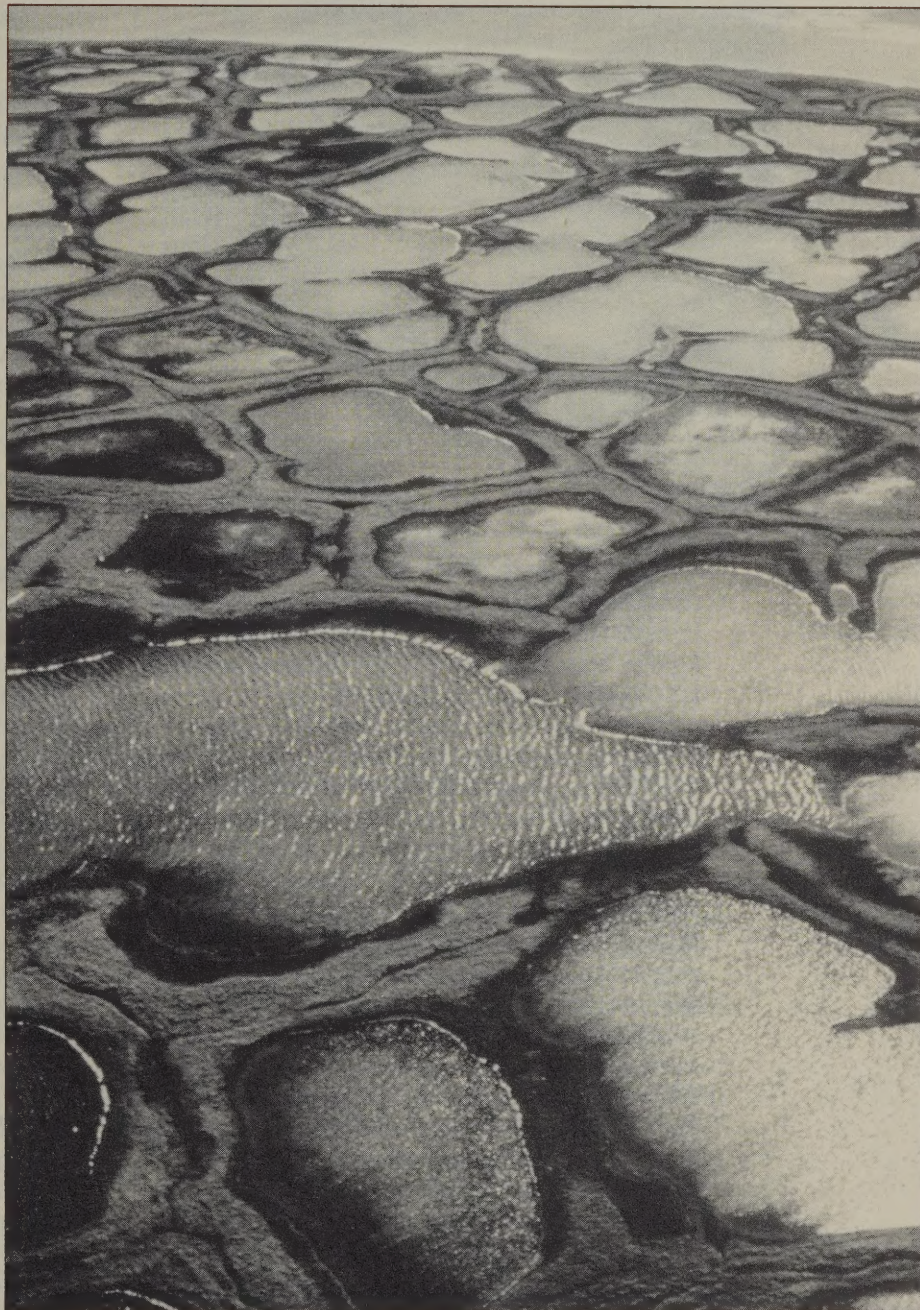
managing public lands for multiple use

Issue 59 January/February 1997

Drilling activity spurs new interest in an old land

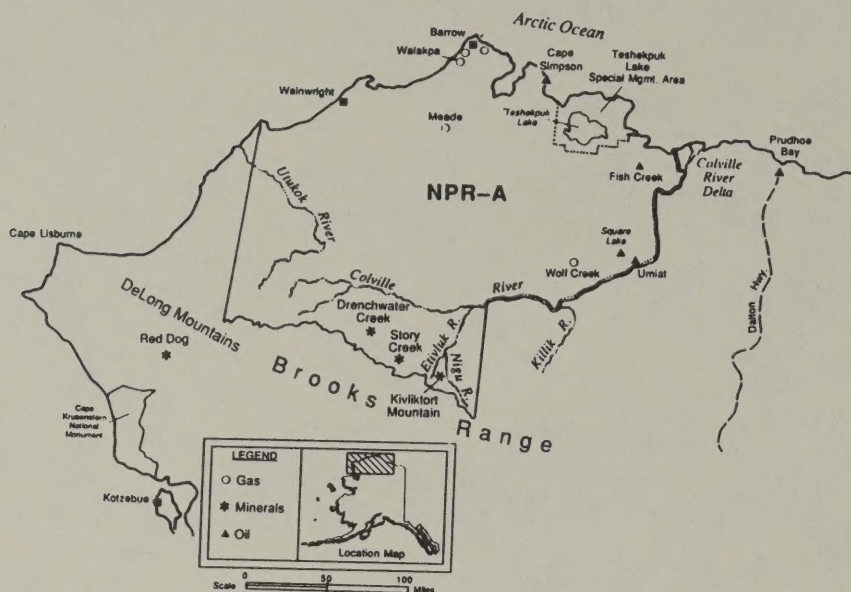
Imagine a land of contrasts. A land where the sun doesn't set in the summer and doesn't rise in the winter. A land where the temperature can be either 80 below or 80 above. A place seemingly desolate and barren of life in one season that bursts forth with delicate flowers and millions of birds a few months later. A land where dinosaurs once roamed. A land populated by Native people practicing a subsistence lifestyle. And a land with coal, oil, hardrock minerals and natural gas hidden beneath its surface.

Such a land exists today in the farthest corner of the United States, just 1,200 miles from the North Pole. It's 23 million acres big and is the largest single tract of public land in the United States. It's the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska or NPR-A.



The Arctic Coastal Plain area at the northern end of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska is characterized by numerous thaw lakes—shallow bodies of water supported by the near-surface permafrost. Many lakes in the NPR-A provide valuable nesting habitat for a variety of migratory birds such as the black brant goose.

BLM announces new planning effort for NPR-A



After a long hibernation following the collapse of oil prices in the 1980s, the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) emerged like a polar bear in January to hit the front pages of newspapers across the country.

At the request of Alaska Governor Tony Knowles, the Secretary of the Interior has directed the BLM to proceed with a new planning effort to determine if there are lands within the northeast part of the Reserve suitable for oil and gas leasing, as well as whether further protections are recommended for wildlife and other habitat resources. "The easiest way to do this is by preparing an integrated activity plan and environmental impact statement," says BLM Alaska State Director Tom Allen.

While no one believes the northernmost part of NPR-A is another Prudhoe Bay (which has more than 12 billion barrels of recoverable oil in-place), the similarities make the area attractive for exploration. The nearby Kuparuk River and Endicott fields, and the recently announced Alpine field, illustrate the possible discoveries in NPR-A. The closest field, the Alpine, has about 300,000 barrels of recoverable oil in-place.

What fuels this new interest in NPR-A? Recently a number of variables have changed that dramatically improve the economics of

developing any large discoveries made in the northeast corner of the reserve:

—Production facilities associated with the development of the Alpine Field will bring a pipeline and related facilities to within about 10 miles of potential NPR-A tracts. Economic studies have shown that the distance to pipeline facilities has been the single most critical variable in determining the viability of tracts.

—Several new fields between Prudhoe Bay and the eastern side of NPR-A have come on line and been sending production through smaller pipelines that hook up to the Trans Alaska Pipeline.

—New engineering techniques associated with drilling and production facilities have lowered the costs of development, making smaller fields attractive targets for production. Drilling pads are much smaller and can be constructed much more quickly and with lower costs compared to those made 30 years ago.

But there is more than oil potential in NPR-A. For example, the Reserve contains some of the largest and most stable wetlands in North America. Some 19 species of swans, geese and ducks breed in NPR-A. About 60,000 black brant, Canada, white-fronted and snow geese use the area around Teshekpuk Lake for breeding and molting. The entire North American population of Stellar's eiders and 80 percent of the world's populations of spectacled eiders nest on the north slope, most within NPR-A. And the 25,000 caribou of the Teshekpuk Lake herd calve and migrate through the area.

Allen says BLM will be looking at all these variables. "In the next 30 days BLM is going to assemble an interagency team composed of a variety of resource specialists. They'll analyze these factors and develop a variety of alternatives that can be evaluated by the public. We expect that the entire process will take about 18 months," says Allen.

"While BLM is responsible for the plan, we will be calling upon other related interests to assist us, and possibly even to complete some tasks associated with this project. Other Interior agencies, state agencies, the North Slope Borough, and Native groups such as the village of Nuiqsut have an interest in NPR-A and adjacent areas," adds Allen. All requirements for public notice and public comment periods on both the draft and final EISs will apply.

—Ed Bovy

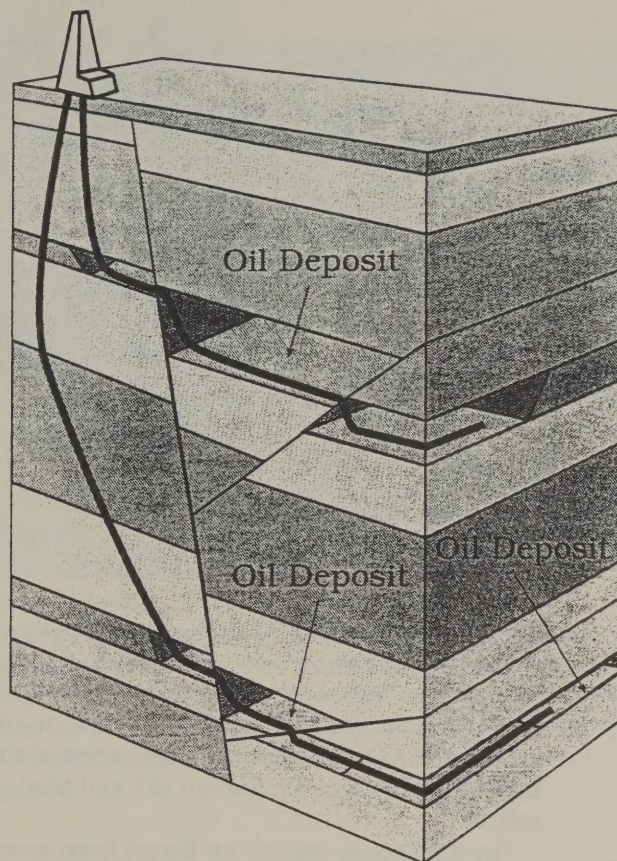
A little history ...

The National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska was originally set aside as Navy Petroleum Reserve No. 4 in 1923 when oil seeps were reported along the north coast of Alaska. Explorers in the area found geologic indications considered favorable for oil and gas. Subsequent field geology, drilling programs and seismic work by the Navy Department and US Geological Survey identified numerous rock units and geographic areas with varying potential for having oil and gas deposits.

In 1976 the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act transferred jurisdiction of NPR-A to the Secretary of the Interior and renamed it the National Petroleum Reserve of Alaska. This act authorized the Secretary to begin further petroleum exploration, and specifically closed NPR-A to all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including mining and mineral leasing laws. The Secretary was also authorized to conduct additional studies of the historical, recreational, fish and wildlife, and wilderness values. The resulting findings and recommendations were reported to Congress regarding the values, best use and appropriate designations of those lands studied.

The US Geological Survey arranged for gathering 15,600 miles of seismic data and data from 40 test wells in preparation for lease sales. Three lease sales were held between 1982-1983 resulting in 44 leases. These leases generated more than \$106 million in revenue.

Designer Wells Schematic



Source: BP Exploration

Modern drilling technology makes pockets of oil, previously difficult to reach, more accessible. In a recent publication, BP Exploration states that a new twist has been added to horizontal drilling, called "designer wells. This is the use of new directional-drilling tools to curve around and behind barriers to reach small oil pockets. Some "inverted" wells even curve back up toward the surface. Others have been drilled with 90 degree turns.

Field	Estimated barrels of recoverable oil
Kuparuk River	2,000,000,000
Endicott	500,000,000
Alpine	300,000,000

Early Alaska roadhouse is window to the past

Early Alaska roadhouse becomes Delta Junction's new museum



Participants in the effort to preserve the historic Sullivan Roadhouse gather at the new site of the roadhouse-turned-museum in Delta Junction to dedicate the building.

From about 1907 until 1923, travelers along the old Fairbanks-Valdez Trail could look forward to shelter from northern winters at the Sullivan Roadhouse. The old roadhouse will soon welcome visitors again as a museum, thanks to a combined effort by the Delta community, the state of Alaska, the U.S. Army and the Bureau of Land Management.

The roadhouse was under threat from snow, rain, wind and wildfire at its former location on Fort Greely, at the edge of the Oklahoma bombing range. For years, the BLM Alaska Fire Service was often called to protect the building from wildfire. Early last summer the building was disassembled and each log was numbered. Soldiers from Fort Greely and Fort Wainwright sling-loaded the logs one by one on two Chinook helicopters, and carried them to a concrete pad near the Visitors Center in Delta Junction.

The museum, expected to open in May, will display excavated artifacts, historic photographs, and archival material about the roadhouse and its era. BLM archeologist John Cook says the roadhouse belonged to Jack and Florence Sullivan, who came to Fairbanks from Wisconsin in 1904 and began their roadhouse business on the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail the following year. "The roadhouse was built, probably in 1906, on the winter cutoff between Donnely and Washburn," says Cook, who coordinated BLM's efforts in the project. "It was strictly a winter business. They operated it until 1923, when the completion of the Alaska Railroad led to a reduction in business."

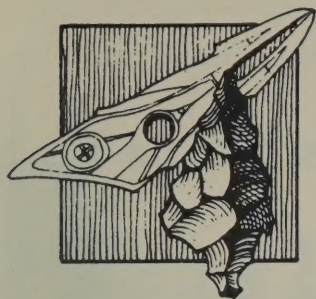
"Roadhouses were built every 25 miles or so along the trails in early-day Alaska and were an important aspect of travel," Cook adds. "Very few of the buildings remain, and almost none are in as good a condition as the Sullivans.' The roadhouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979."

Cleeta Barger of the Delta Chamber of Commerce said efforts to move the roadhouse began in 1992, when Mike Silva, AFS fire management officer, wrote asking if there was anything the chamber could do. The chamber contacted the Army, which found funding through the Legacy Resource Management Program. The Department of Defense appropriated \$50,000 for a feasibility study and \$200,000 to move the building.

Archaeologists from the Army Corps of Engineers, BLM, and the State Historic Preservation Office, along with volunteers from the University of Alaska, worked at the site in the summer of 1994, unearthing artifacts about the roadhouse and its occupants. They located the stable, which contained horseshoes outfitted with cleats, and found the remains of a wagon and a trash pile of bottles, cans and a leather boot.

Northern District manager Dee Ritchie says renovating the roadhouse was an example of the benefits that can occur when agencies work together. "We've saved the expense of protecting the building from wildfire, and added a window into the past for local residents and travelers in Delta Junction," says Ritchie.

—Andy Williams



Beringia mysteries erode as information accumulates

One of the greatest mysteries in archaeology is the early human migration over the Bering Land Bridge. Researchers from around the world have chipped away at this mystery for more than 100 years, trying to get a more accurate picture of this period in human history. Clues about how these early cultures foraged, hunted and adapted in the New World are scattered across the North American continent, yet Alaska holds a vital key to putting the fragmented pieces together.

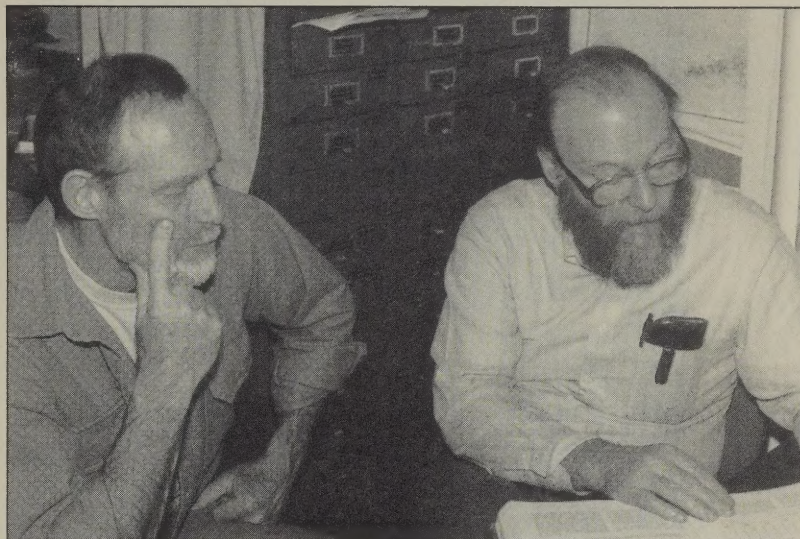
A recently published book, *"American Beginnings—The Pre-history and Paleoecology of Beringia,"* is being hailed as the most contemporary and comprehensive of its kind dealing with the beginnings of Native American pre-history. "This book is kind of a milestone as it pulls together in one place various sites and data about the circumpolar North," says John P. Cook, an archaeologist in BLM-Alaska's Northern District.

Much of the information in the book has been published before in science journals and magazines over the past several years. Editor Frederick West included chapters by Cook, BLM archaeologist Michael Kunz, and BLM volunteer archaeologist Richard Reanier, on their findings on the Healy Lake, Mesa, Hilltop, Bedwell and Putu sites.

"I think of all the things we have published, this is up there at the top because this is the first book dedicated to this specific period," says Kunz, Mesa project director. The Mesa site was one of 50 separate sites covered by the book.

Kunz discovered the Mesa site in 1978 while doing an archaeological inventory in the area. The Mesa site, which stands 60 meters above the surrounding countryside, yielded bifacial spearheads and other stone tools dating back more than 11,000 years. The geographic importance of the solitary rock platform was evident as it was a perfect natural observation point to scout the game that roamed the vast, treeless valley floor.

"The Mesa site was the first well-documented Paleoindian site in Alaska," Kunz says. "Until the Mesa site, the oldest evidence for North American culture was found in the heartland of the continent," says Kunz. "This was one of those findings I thought was important from the beginning."



Mike Kunz, left, and John Cook of the BLM's Northern District review *American Beginnings—The Pre-history and Paleoecology of Beringia*, a recently published book about the earliest migrations of humans to the North American continent. The two BLM archaeologists were among the authors who contributed chapters to the book.

West, a former Fairbanks researcher and scholar who wrote and edited the book, believes it will be a valuable reference tool mostly because of the hard evidence it presents, and because it deals with one of the most dramatic changes in the earth's history. "I'm confident that this will serve as a compendium of data for many years to come," says West.

—Andrew Arenson

"I think of all the things we have published, this is up there at the top because this is the first book dedicated to this specific period."—Michael Kunz, Mesa project director.

A warm winter welcome

BLM's new Borealis LeFevre cabin greets White Mountains visitors

This year snowmachiners, dog mushers and cross-country skiers familiar with the old A-frame Borealis-LeFevre cabin are finding something different—a brand new cabin built by BLM crews last summer. Goodwin says the old cabin had developed structural problems. “The cabin had served its useful life. Our engineering staff took a look at it and determined it would be more expensive to maintain the cabin than to replace it,” says Randy Goodwin, outdoor recreation planner for the Northern District.

The new 12-by-16-foot structure is made with three-sided logs. It has a large bunk bed and a loft to sleep six to eight people. There is also a wood stove for heating, as well as a cook stove, lantern and other amenities to keep overnight visitors snug and comfortable.

The cabin sits on a small bluff near Beaver Creek National Wild River, about 20 miles from the trailhead off Mile 28 on the Elliott Highway. Travelers access it in the winter over the Wickersham Creek Trail; in the summer hikers may reach it over the Summit Trail.

For 25 years, the Borealis-LeFevre Cabin was a welcome sight to travelers in the White Mountains north of Fairbanks. Built by the Borealis Kiwanis Club in 1970, the cabin was donated to the Bureau of Land Management for use as a public recreation cabin.

The Borealis-LeFevre cabin became the first of nine public recreation cabins managed and maintained by BLM along the 200-mile trail system within in the White Mountains National Recreation Area (NRA). Randy Goodwin, outdoor recreation planner, estimates that more than 5,600 people used the cabins in the NRA last year. Thousands more used the trail system and other facilities maintained by BLM in the White Mountains.

The cabin was designed by BLM civil engineer Roger Evans, and built by a crew from the White Mountains NRA Team and the Alaska Fire Service. “This is the tenth or eleventh cabin we’ve built, so we have the process pretty well refined,” Goodwin says.



Norma Pfeiffer

BLM workers assemble the new Borealis-LeFevre Cabin in the White Mountains National Recreation Area. The new BLM public recreation cabin replaces one that had stood since 1970.

Eric Yeager, a BLM outdoor recreation planner, worked with the Borealis Kiwanis Club in planning the new cabin. Prefabrication work was done in the spring and the materials were divided into helicopter loads. The 20,000 pounds in materials and supplies were trucked to the trailhead about 35 miles north of Fairbanks and sling-loaded to the construction site by helicopter.

A six-member crew took six days to assemble the cabin. They included Goodwin, AFS carpenter Bill Baker, BLM seasonal workers Collin Cogley and Tim DuPont, and BLM volunteers Russell deForest and Norma Pfeiffer.

Goodwin says the new cabin is about 100 feet away from the old cabin site and has a better view. Nestled among the spruce trees and overlooking Beaver Creek and the White Mountains beyond, the cabin is ready to welcome travelers along the trail for the next 25 years.

—Andy Williams

It's on the "Net"—

Find recreation information on BLM's Home Page

Internet users can find information about the White Mountains National Recreation Area and other units in the BLM Northern District on the Internet under the BLM Home Page. The White Mountains NRA Page describes the area and available recreation opportunities.

Browsers can find information about campgrounds, trails, cabins and procedures for reserving cabins. Trail conditions are updated regularly and a section tells prospective users what they need to know to plan a trip.

Cabins rent for \$20 a night on Friday and Saturday nights, and \$15 a night for other nights. You can reserve a BLM public recreation cabin by contacting:

BLM Public Room
1150 University Ave.
Fairbanks, AK 99709
(907) 474-2251

Internet users may access the Northern District Home Page at:

<http://wwwndo.ak.blm.gov/>.

The White Mountains NRA Page may be accessed directly at:

<http://wwwndo.ak.blm.gov/WhiteMtns/main.html/>.

—Andy Williams

BLM fire specialist receives safety award



David Jandt of the Alaska Fire Service receives the Jerry Maulk Memorial Award for fire safety from Les Rosenkrance, National Director of Fire and Aviation for the BLM, at the National Fire Management Conference in San Diego in December. Jandt received the award for his work on annual firefighter safety refresher training for AFS.

The Jerry Mauk Memorial Award for Fire Safety was presented in December to David Jandt, a fire management officer with the BLM Alaska Fire Service in Fairbanks.

The national wildland fire award, established by BLM in 1987, recognizes outstanding contributions to firefighter safety. The award honored Jandt's work to develop annual firefighter safety refresher training for the BLM Alaska Fire Service. Jandt was also recognized for his work in the development of the Alaska Regions Fireline Safety Committee, a group that works with all agencies having wildland fire safety responsibility.

The prestigious award acknowledges that 1996 was a record year for wildfire activity and that there were no federal firefighter deaths in the line of duty. It also serves as a memorial for Jerry Mauk, who served as the agency's Chief of Fire and Aviation for many years. Mauk, who was highly committed to firefighter safety, died in service to the wildland fire management community.

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt named Sylvia Baca as Interim Director of the Bureau of Land Management. She succeeds Michael Dombeck, who was BLM Acting Director for more than two years. Dombeck left the agency in January to become Chief of the U.S. Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture.

Ms. Baca had served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, a division of the Interior Department that oversees BLM, Minerals Management Service, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. She will return to that position after the selection and confirmation of a permanent BLM Director.

Babbitt says Baca has earned a reputation as a knowledgeable, skilled and energetic manager. As Interim Director, Ms. Baca will oversee the day-to-day operations of an agency that is responsible for managing 265 million acres of public land, located mostly in the Western United States and Alaska. The BLM manages an additional 300 million acres of

subsurface mineral rights held by the federal government.

Prior to joining the Interior Department two years ago as Deputy Assistant Secretary, Ms. Baca was Director of Finance and Management for the City of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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The Federal Departments of Agriculture and Interior increased the price of a Golden Eagle Passport to \$50. The passport is an entrance pass to federal lands including national parks, refuges, recreation areas, historic sites and monuments that charge entrance fees. It admits the pass holder and any accompanying passengers in a private vehicle. When entry is not by private vehicle, the passport admits the pass holder, spouse, children and parents. It's valid for a 12-month period.

The one-time \$10 fee for the lifetime Golden Age Passport, available to citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. who are 62 years of age or older,

will remain the same. For those who are blind or permanently disabled, passports will continue to be offered at no charge.

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The Bureau of Land Management selected Jerry Brossia as the BLM Authorized Officer with lead federal responsibility over the Joint Pipeline Office (JPO). Brossia retired from his position as the Alaska Department of Natural Resources's State Pipeline Coordinator to take the job.

BLM-Alaska State Director Tom Allen says Brossia's top priority will be to ensure the continued safe operation of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. John Shively, Commissioner of the state Department of Natural Resources, also expressed confidence in Brossia's experience.

The JPO is a consortium of six State and five Federal agencies formed in 1990. It's tasked with regulating the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, and other oil and gas pipelines in Alaska.



Editor: Janet S. Malone

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BLM-AK-GI-94-005-1120-912

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